

# **Attachment 4**

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HEADLINE: Muslims >From Afar Joining ' Holy War' in Bosnia

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BODY:

The conflict between Serbs and Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina, while provoking little more than official condemnation and appeals for increased United Nations intervention by Arab governments, has been adopted by Islamic fundamentalists as the newest holy war against Christian infidels bent on the destruction of Islam.

In the last few weeks the conflict has lured several hundred militants, many of them veterans of the war in Afghanistan, to volunteer for the Bosnian forces. Although the number of volunteers is small, their commitment reflects a much larger public outpouring of support for the Bosnian Muslims that is placing increased pressure on Arab rulers to respond to the crisis.

"The war in Bosnia and Herzegovina has become the emotional equivalent of the fight against fascism in the Spanish Civil War," said Khaled al-Maeena, a newspaper editor. "Those who died there are regarded as martyrs who tried to save their fellow Muslims."

In Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Algeria, gruesome videocassettes depict the fighting and what its producers say are examples of Serbian atrocities.

The videos, in addition to showing rows of mutilated corpses and wounded fighters and civilians, often include footage from World War II concentration camps to draw parallels between the past slaughter of Jews and the current slaughter of Muslims by European Christians.

Arab newspapers and television stations increasingly focus on the conflict, and private Islamic charity groups have collected tens of millions of dollars for the Bosnians, as they once did for the Palestinians.

Arab government officials, under pressure from the groundswell of support for the Bosnians, are trying to wrest the popular cause from the fundamentalists.

The 47-member Islamic Conference Organization ended a two-day meeting in Jidda on Wednesday with a call for the lifting of a United Nations arms embargo so the Bosnian Muslims they can defend themselves. The embargo now applies to all sides of the conflict, though arms smuggling is said to be widespread.

But months after the first reports of Serbs sweeping across Bosnia, wiping out villages and killing Muslim families, many Arabs are beginning to wonder why their governments delayed acting for so long. The militant clerics who accuse the region's rulers of indifference are starting to sting.

"The militant religious movement has set out to challenge the legitimacy of the Saudi ruling family and the other Arab governments," a prominent journalist said, "and one of the best ways to do this is by pointing out how ineffectual they have been in helping the Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina."

#### 400 Saudis in Fight

There are an estimated 400 Saudi volunteers, many veterans of Afghanistan, along with Arabs from Egypt, Pakistan, the Sudan and Algeria fighting with the Muslim forces. They see in the fight a pure, good battle against the forces of darkness.

"I am ready to die if God wills it," said Riaz Qayyum, a Pakistani laborer who has worked in Saudi Arabia for 20 years and is scheduled to leave for Bosnia on Monday. "When a Muslim sees these photos and reads about the slaughter of women, children and old people, how else can he react?"

Many of these volunteers come from comfortable middle- and upper-class homes. They fight for one or two months and then return to Saudi Arabia.

More than two dozen Saudis have been killed in Bosnia. For those who die, the militant clerics have promised shahada, the direct ascent to heaven granted to anyone who falls defending the faith.

In the last few weeks the pictures of young Saudi men killed by Serbian forces have appeared in local newspapers, although the names below the bearded fighters are usually their noms de guerre. In videos that circulate throughout the country, parents who lost sons often thank God for the sacrifice.

The volunteers are sponsored by a variety of militant religious organizations and often have their expenses and plane fare covered. But it appears that few of the men get anything beyond what they need to survive.

The Islamic institutions, especially those in Saudi Arabia, are well financed. Saudi officials say that the Government has donated \$100 million to the Islamic institutions for Bosnia relief efforts and that private donations, which according to a new law must be funneled through the Government, have added \$50 million.

Despite formal denials from the relief organizations, Saudi officials say an increasing amount of the charity on behalf of the Bosnians is now used to provide arms and logistical support for Arab volunteers.

"Since August most of the money raised for relief has been turned over to the Bosnians for weapons," a Saudi official said. "And most contributors probably support this."

#### Firepower Is Improved

Reports from the Balkans suggest that the Arab assistance has significantly improved the firepower of the Muslim-dominated Bosnian Government forces, providing assault rifles, mortars, rockets and other weapons to troops who had been equipped largely with hunting rifles and shotguns at the beginning of the war.

The Saudi-based Islamic Relief Organization, one of the largest charity organizations, funnels money, relief workers and supplies to Bosnia, although its officials strenuously deny that they provide any backing for the military effort.

"If a relief worker decides that he wants to join the fighting forces, we would not stop him," said Adel A. Batterjee, the chairman of the World Assembly of Muslim Youth. "But he can no longer officially represent our organization."

The authorities forbid any public acknowledgement that any Saudi citizens are involved directly in the Balkan conflict. But Government officials say men who volunteer for the relief work often end up as soldiers.

The World Assembly of Muslim Youth, which organized relief operations in Afghanistan and is now deeply involved in the conflict in the Balkans, flies back wounded Saudi fighters and provides free medical care in the Saudi German hospital.

On the second floor of the modern medical complex in a Jidda suburb several rooms hold wounded Saudi fighters, but bearded companions in the hallway and officials at the Islamic Organization, while confirming that the wounded combatants were in the hospital, refused to let an American reporter speak with them.